


EXTREME

extreme
grammar

making grammar
accessible to everyone
by explaining a few
simple rules



Learning
grammar is a bit
like ice climbing:
sometimes you have
to hang on for dear
life.

CLARITY

Being understood is the goal of all writers. Clarity in writing affords the reader the greatest opportunity to understand the writer's intention with ease.

In the movie *A Few Good Men*, Col Nathan R. Jessep, played by Jack Nicholson, challenges LT Daniel Kaffee, played by Tom Cruise, as to whether Kaffee understands the colonel's instructions: "Are we clear?" "Crystal."

This is a perfect example of call and response—feedback—an opportunity for both parties to confirm to one another that the message is understood. However, in writing, unlike in oral conversation, the writer receives no response from the reader. The writer must ensure that he or she is crystal clear, so that the reader will *clearly* understand the intended message.

To write clearly, one must be aware of the audience to whom he or she is

writing. Knowing the audience allows the writer to choose words, phrases, and constructions that are likely to be understood.

The writer must also be specific and precise. These two words are not synonymous, and both are required for writing clarity. Writers must specifically identify the thesis and arguments of their position, using precise language that is unambiguous.

Clear sentences are usually direct and succinct. Direct sentences focus on one argument at a time; that is, they are narrow in content.

Multiple arguments may be necessary to defend a position, and the combination of arguments will add to the clarity of the composed message. Writers will often have to present

multiple examples, anticipating that not all examples will ring true for the reader.

One of the best tips to increase the clarity of writing is begin the writing process with an outline.

Once the topic selection and research are done, creating an outline will help the writer to organize the principal arguments into a sequence that makes the most sense, for both the writer and the reader.

With the topic, thesis, audience analysis, and outline in hand, a writer may begin to compose the arguments, always focusing on conveying his or her intentions in a manner that the audience will most clearly understand. Clarity must always remain the writer's principal intention.

